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JUDGE WALTER B. DOUGLAS.

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By CHARLES P. PETTUS.

In the death of Judge Walter Bond Douglas, which occurred on November 7, 1920, the Missouri Historical Society of St. Louis sustained an irreparable loss, the Mississippi Valley lost one of her most able historians and the world a gentleman of the noblest type.

The people of St. Louis knew him as an upright judge who had done honor to the Circuit Bench; as a member of the Bar who exemplified the finest ideals of the legal profession. This has been well expressed by Mr. Tyrrell Williams, who writes: "I had much admiration for Judge Douglas as a lawyer and a historian, but at this time, I want to speak of what I regard as most important for a lawyer to possess, namely, a clear distinction between what we call law and something else which we may as well call morality. * * * I judge lawyers very largely by the attitudes they assume towards these occasional gaps between law and morality. They are the lawyers who in the long run improve conditions and preserve society."

Though a Democrat in the full sense, he never followed the mob, but kept himself within the moorings of sane and sound government. Always self-effacing, with the natural instinct of the historical student, Judge Douglas combined rare mentality with an altruistic bend and gave his talents lavishly to the community.

Even as early as 1897 Judge Douglas had become identified with the Missouri Historical Society and was making its development along the best lines of labor of love. In January 1903 he was chosen President of the Society.

He superintended the historical exhibit for the Society at the Louisiana Purchase Exposition held in St. Louis in 1904.

He was one of the foremost workers for the week-long celebration of the Centennial of the incorporation of the City of St. Louis in 1909.

He contributed in no small measure to the great success of the St. Louis Pageant and Masque held in Forest Park in 1915.

But as an authority on the history of St. Louis and Missouri, and in fact of the whole Mississippi and Missouri Valleys, Judge Douglas was best known far beyond the State's borders.

He was in demand for addresses before historical Societies, he was consulted on historical questions in dispute, and he responded always cheerfully and with conscientious devotion to accuracy.

At the time of his death, Judge Douglas was preparing several works which he hoped to publish. That he had not finished them, was due largely to the fact that he was forever giving all of his spare time helping others with the publication of their works, always encouraging others to do their best that he might credit them with all the help he could give them in doing it.

For many years he was editor of the Missouri Historical Society's Collections. In Volume III, was published his scholarly article on Manuel Lisa. He also edited with most interesting notes, James' "Three Years Among the Indians."

On request he prepared papers for other Societies such as his address on "Sieur de St. Ange," published in the Transactions of the Illinois State Historical Society, (No. 14, 1909). Such papers and brief articles signed with his initials in the Missouri Historical Society Collections, no nothing more than suggest the power he had developed as a historical authority.

Judge Douglas was born in Brunswick, Missouri, December 20, 1851; son of James Marsh and Caroline (Bond) Douglas. Graduated from Westminster College, A. B., 1873. Harvard University Law School, LL.B., 1877. Admitted to the practice of law in Missouri, May 1878; Judge of the Circuit Court of St. Louis, 1901; Secretary of the Judicial conference since 1903. Instructor in Benton Law School in 1898 and for several succeeding years. Member of the American Bar Association, of the American Historical Association, and of the University, Jefferson and Mercantile Clubs,

and an honorary member of the Illinois State Historical Society.

He was a Missourian, this was a primary fact. But, he also loved to remember that he was a Scotchman by descent and by tradition. The thistle to him, was probably the loveliest bloom. This spirit was evidenced at his summer home "Spot" in Florissant, when celebrating the birthdays of his children each year, he would engage a Scotchman, attired in kilts, to play his bag-pipe on the lawn.

Judge Douglas was married April 29, 1891, to Francesca B. Kimball. He is survived by his widow and the following children: Antoinette, Marjory, James Marsh, Francis Paxton and William Cerre.

The members of the Missouri Historical Society knew him as the official who for more than twenty years had been the main stay of the organization, carrying on not only cheerfully but with enthusiasm the burden of the details. That the library, the manuscripts, the archives, the fur trade correspondence, the war trophies and the varied collections of the Society have grown until they tax the spacious Jefferson Memorial is due to Judge Douglas in a greater degree than to any other person.

In these sordid times, how refreshing was his unselfish spirit which never lowered its standard, however great the cost.